



Effectiveness of an occupational therapy wellness programme for older adults living in long-term care.

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Introduction

The delivery of occupation-based wellness programmes has been found to be effective for community-dwelling older adults (Clark et al, 2012; Clark et al, 2001; Craig and Mountain, 2007 Jackson et al, 2009). This evidence is cited in national guidelines on the promotion of mental health and well-being of older people which are currently implemented across the UK (NICE, 2008).

However there is a need to explore applicability in a range of settings. The impact of occupation-based, health-promoting lifestyle interventions has not been examined in long-term care (LTC) settings.

Setting

Based in Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services, our LTC is a specialist residential service offering gerontological expertise to high-dependent frail older people with chronic illness. Within the service, 40 of the 100 beds are designated as palliative care support beds.

Occupational therapy

The focus of Occupational Therapy (OT) in this setting is on maximising choice and independence, enhancing well-being and quality of life.

OT aims to maximise the 'fit' between what an individual wants and needs to be able to do and their abilities to achieve this. This involves empowering people to improve or maintain their independence and satisfaction with life in the areas of self-care, productivity and leisure.



Study aims

This study evaluates the impact of participation in a 12-week OT wellness programme in LTC on residents':

- Performance and satisfaction in doing daily tasks
- Confidence
- Mental well-being
- Overall life satisfaction.



The programme is driven by residents' needs and based on 'Lifestyle Matters' (Craig and Mountain, 2007), focusing on enabling participants to undertake new or neglected activities, make lifestyle choices and undertake personal goal-setting.

The intervention positions the older person as expert, thereby facilitating improved confidence, and associated positive behaviours. The overall goal is to promote long-term change and associated psychological benefit.

Targeted population

- Adults aged over 65 years living in LTC
- Identified as having impairment in occupational performance
- Identified as having sufficient physical ability (e.g. hearing, energy levels)
- Identified as having sufficient mental capacity (MMSE score ≥ 18)



Methods

A small-scale mixed methods research design was adopted.

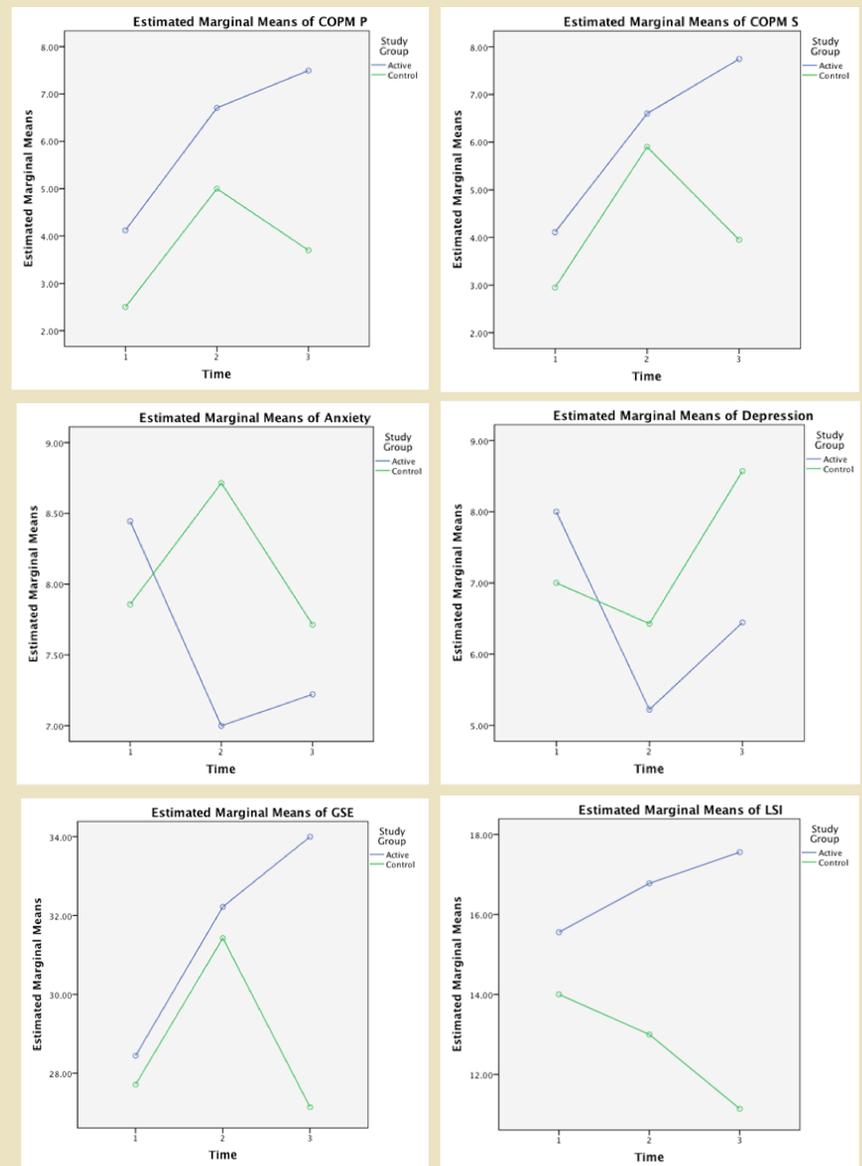
A randomised, wait-list controlled design (n=20) used the following outcome measures:

- Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM)
- Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)
- Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)
- Life Satisfaction Index (LSI-Z)

Data collection occurred at three time-points using each of the four instruments (Time 1 = 0 weeks; Time 2= 12 weeks; Time 3= 24 weeks)

A qualitative focus group explored the experiences of participants following the 12 week programme.

Results



There were improvements in Occupational Performance and Satisfaction, Self-efficacy, Anxiety and Depression, and Life Satisfaction for the treatment group over time, but not for the control group. The graphs indicate clear trends although results are not statistically significant, due small sample size.

Qualitative findings

Improved Confidence/Self-efficacy, Peer Support, and Goal Attainment were some of the perceived benefits described by focus group participants

Since I've been to the group... I have settled here, I have overcome a lot of the negativity I had in relation to being very dependent...

Of the goals that I set I have changed my activities day to day...

We're not old lassies sitting on the wall, criticising everything... we are part of what's going on...

Conclusion

As an exploratory study, results confirm the tangible benefits that older people living in LTC can obtain from a health-promoting, occupation-based intervention. Further study is required, with larger sample sizes and a second wave is underway.